

Community Changes and Social Capital: Organizing Issues based on Previous Studies

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1 . Introduction

The purpose of this study is to clarify the various characteristics of a community as well as changes in awareness toward communities and challenges related to developing social capital by arranging the content of previous studies on changes taking place in communities and social capital. Further, this study will help elucidate information that would contribute to the analysis and examination shown in “Community Awareness and Local Disaster Prevention Capabilities of Citizens in Kawasaki –Results of Web-Based Questionnaire Analysis–” and “Community Awareness of Citizens in Kawasaki-City Centered around Community Association Members – Results of Questionnaire Survey Conducted through Voluntary Disaster Prevention Organizations–.”

The term community in this paper refers to a group that shares a geographical administrative or residential district, such as a ward or a town. Communities that are in territories separated from regional communities, such as communities at a workplace or communities on the Internet, have not been included in this study provided in this paper. Thus, to note, all references to the term communities used from here on forward assume that they point to a collective society in a region.

2 . Past Studies on Communities

2 - 1 . Definition of a Community

The Community Issues Subcommittee of the Quality of Life Council’s Survey Group (1969) defines community as “an open-minded group in which mutual trust exists among the members and exists in an everyday setting, primarily consisting of individuals and families who are conscious about being both independent and responsible as citizens and share regional characteristics as well as various common goals.”¹ Meanwhile, Yoshinori Hiroi (2009) defines

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¹ Community Issues Subcommittee of the Quality of Life Council’s Survey Group (1969), pp. 155-156.

a community as “a group that feels some sense of belonging and in which the members feel a certain type of solidarity or otherwise possess an awareness to be mutually helpful.”² In other words, a community that serves as a regional society can be called “a social group (an assembly), which consisting primarily of individuals and families, that maintains the characteristics of a region and cooperation (sense of solidarity, sense of belonging, awareness of mutual support) while sharing various social and economic interests.”

Major groups that support a community are expressed as existing in various organizational formats, such as a community association, a neighborhood association, an association of seniors, and their activities include those related to the region, the community and the locality. A report by the Cabinet Office’s Social Policy Bureau (2003) classifies regional activities into those conducted by “community associations, neighborhood associations, women’s associations, an association of seniors, youth associations, children’s associations, etc.,” and divides volunteer and NPO activities into “town planning, providing welfare for the elderly and the handicapped, childcare, sports instruction, beautification of the area, crime and disaster prevention, the environment, international cooperation, making proposals, etc.” Such voluntary and independent social activities consisting mainly of regional residents are generically termed as “civic activities.”

Various social and economic effectiveness, roles and challenges exist in a community, and the significance of community research is to debate on these topics. The aforementioned Quality of Life Council (1969) notes that a community “must establish its function as the bastion of restoration for humanity in today’s civilized society” by fulfilling its role of being “a group that realizes the various and diversifying demands and imagination of its residents based on the residents’ autonomy and responsibility.”³ This view can be seen as one that hopes for an urban-style community to be established with a “civic-minded population” who respect autonomy and independence aiming to restore humanity. This is to occur amid a dramatic weakening of the function of regional groups, which has resulted from deteriorating traditional regional groups that consist of a “traditional population,” due to rapid social changes brought about by high economic growth, while a massive influx of an “indifferent population” that does not have much interest in regional life has taken place, resulting in significant deterioration of regional community function in urban areas.⁴

A community is essential for human beings, who are social animals, to realize their humanity and self-fulfillment. Looking at it from the perspective of the overall society, there is a vague sense of insecurity among modern men that waning moral values and a sense of public duty due to a loss of cooperation among people (connections among people and sense of

² Yoshinori Hiroi (2009).

³ Community Issues Subcommittee of the Quality of Life Council’s Survey Group (1969), pp. 155-156.

⁴ Quality of Life Council (1969), p.156, regarding “traditional population”; “indifferent population” and “civic-minded population.”

solidarity) could lead to more crime and rampant social malaise, resulting in social destruction. The significance of research on communities lies here, in that it suggests prescriptions or ideas for “discourse on restoring a sense of cooperation⁵.” Also, from the standpoint of being functional for practical living, a community exists as “a place where various demands of the regional residents, which cannot be fulfilled by individuals and families alone, are achieved⁶” and plays a role of functioning as a safeguard for life and a safety net by providing welfare-related public (social) services.

Regarding this point, the Research Group on the New Roles of Communities (2009) indicates concern that “despite the diversifying and the more sophisticated needs for public services that relate closely to everyday life, a ‘hollowing out of regional cooperation’ is gaining ground, leading to a condition in which there is a lack of a basic mechanism for regional cooperation to offer such services in a sustainable, comprehensive and an effective manner” amid the social and economic changes taking place in recent years due to the aging society and the low birth rate as well as a decline in the population and strained regional finances⁷. Proposing solutions to such challenges is also the essence of community research.

2 - 2 . Changes in Community

This paper will arrange the findings of past research on ways in which changes took place in communities as a result of relationships among neighbors as well as civic activities by community associations and other entities.

(1) Diminishing connections

Life in traditional Japanese communities, namely rural village societies, was completely dependent on the community, and thus the connections among people were extremely close, while on the other hand, these communities were closed, had numerous conventional restrictions and were not conducive to maintaining privacy. According to the Cabinet Office (2007), the connections in these communities started to diminish by a certain degree starting in the 1950s and the trend has not stopped in recent years⁸. The Quality of Life Council (1969) has set forth seven factors that have contributed to diminishing connections in communities.

(1) The expansion of one’s daily existence due to the development of transportation and communication facilities: reduced dependency on regional communities as a result of a broader

⁵ Haruya Sakamoto (2010), p. 19.

⁶ The Community Issues Subcommittee of the Quality of Life Council’s Survey Group (1969), p. 163, It comments that the need for a community is inherent in human life, and that “people are social animals” and “engages in relationships with strangers in life.”

⁷ Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, Community Exchange Promotion Division (2009) pp. 6-7.

⁸ Cabinet Office (2007): “connections,” namely, “family”; “region”; and the “workplace” that people pursue continuously in their lifetime, are analyzed in terms of their changes and current condition, their impact on the Japanese people’s lifestyle, and ongoing movements toward rebuilding “connections,” among other issues.

area covered by one's daily existence due to advancements in motorization, popularization of television and telephones, diversified commodity production, and improved consumption levels.

(2) Concentrated population in urban areas: The function of regional communities in urban areas has weakened due to a massive influx of the young and employed population disinterested in regional life that is taking place along with changes in industrial and employment structures, and rural areas finding it difficult to maintain regional communities.

(3) The urbanization of lifestyles and awareness about living: An awareness of urban lifestyles, characterized by rationale, equality, anonymity, individuality and other attributes, started to spread due to the massive influx of the young and employed population into cities and also got entrenched in rural life through families that traveled to cities, the mass media and other means.

(4) Increase in functional groups: The value of existence of regional communities became comparatively less due to the emergence of various types of groups (a gathering of those with a common purpose in sports, hobbies, culture, travel and other interests) that serve to substitute for the functions performed by regional communities in the past or possess a function that transcends the framework established by regional communities.

(5) Expanded administrative functions: Residents started to hold expectations for administrative entities as work that had been performed by neighborhood or village associations started to get transferred to administrative entities after the Second World War.

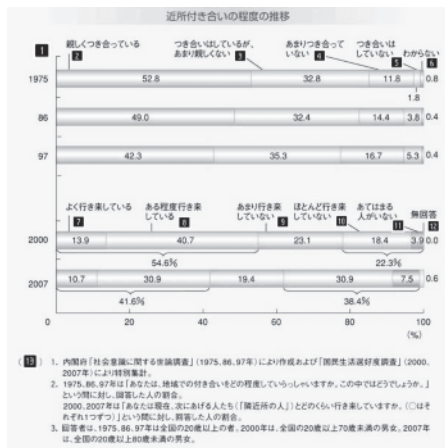
(6) Transformation of the family system: This transformed the sense of value toward regional communities, which was based on a patriarchal system in which everyone was connected through the home, and radically undermined this connection.

(7) Changes to the production structure in rural villages: As the production of agricultural products used to be the common goal of residents, the role of a regional community was great because of the need to perform various types of communal work. However, the impact of traditional regional communities started to wane as land reform brought about a disappearance of status differences between land owners and tenant farmers, an increase in the number of families that worked in other professions in addition to farming as well as non-farming families and the emergence of unionized entities due to the change in the production structure.

In addition to these factors, a lifestyle that separated work and living became popular after the 1960s when people moved to live in the suburbs or newly built towns and work in a city. As a result, interest toward regional societies or connections with them started to wane among the residents. Further, in recent years, there has been a continuing decline in young people and the working generation contributing to regional activities due to changes in social structures resulting from the aging society and the low birth rate or an increase in the number of single households. Further, another factor is an increase in the number of people who are more interested in a web-based community rather than a geographical one due to changes in relationships as a result of progress seen in transmitting information (Internet, etc.).

(2) Changes in interactions with neighbors

Regarding the diminishing connections in regions, the Cabinet Office (2007) has represented their changes in a time series. Figure 1 shows the changes in the degree of interactions with neighbors from 1975 through 2007⁹. Figure 2 shows the changes that took place from 1973 through 2003 in what respondents saw as a desirable way to interact with neighbors¹⁰.



- ① Year
- ② Close interaction
- ③ Interacting, but not very close
- ④ Not interacting that much
- ⑤ Not interacting at all
- ⑥ Don't know
- ⑦ Frequently visits each other
- ⑧ Visits each other to a certain degree
- ⑨ Does not visit each other that much
- ⑩ Virtually does not visit each other
- ⑪ An applicable person does not exist
- ⑫ No answer

Figure 1: Changes in the degree of interactions with neighbors

⑬ (Note)

1. Created based on *Public Opinion Survey on Social Awareness*, Cabinet Office (1975, 1986, 1997) and numbers especially tabulated from *The National survey on lifestyle preferences* (2000, 2007).
2. For 1975, 1986 and 1997, the percentage represents respondents who answered the question: What level of interaction do you have in the region? Which one of these applies to you?
For 2000 and 2007, the percentage is of the respondents who answered the question: How often do you visit each other's places with your neighbors? (Choose only one answer)
3. For 1975, 1986 and 1997, the respondents were at least 20 years old nationwide. For 2000, the respondents were men and women who are at least 20 years old and less than 70 years old nationwide. For 2007, the respondents were men and women who were at least 20 years old and less than 80 years old nationwide.

⁹ Cabinet Office (2007), Figure 2-1-19 on p. 78.

¹⁰ Cabinet Office (2007), Figure 2-1-28 on p. 85.

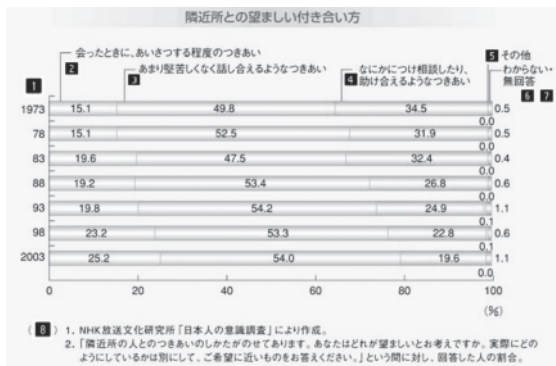


Figure 2: Desirable ways to interact with neighbors

⑧ (Note)

1. Created from NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute's *Public Opinion Survey on the Present State of People's Awareness*.
2. The percentage of respondents who answered the question: Here are ways in which one can interact with neighbors. Which one do you think is desirable for you? Aside from how you interact in real life, please answer the one that is closed to your preference.

The following characteristics can be noted upon closer look at these changes. According to *the 2004 national survey on lifestyle preference*¹¹ by the Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2004), 57.2% of the respondents answered that their interactions with neighbors have "not changed," while 66.1% responded by saying that they are "not close" with their neighbors. Regarding interactions with neighbors in the future, 52.8% responded by saying that "it would be fine to not get closer," while 46.9% said that they "would like to get close." Out of those who answered that they "would like to get close," 51.2% of them were in their 60s and 63.5% in their 70s, showing that awareness toward connections with neighbors changes greatly depending on the age range.

¹¹ The Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2004); this survey was conducted based on the theme of "a safe society and its connection with people" and polled the awareness of Japanese people toward the following main items: (1) connections among people in the region and their activities; (2) connection between people and their work; (3) public safety and its connection with people in the region; and (4) the elderly and their connection with the people in the region. The survey targeted men and women nationwide who were at least 15 years old and less than 80 years old (a stratified random sampling method with two strata; number of valid responses: 3,908) and was conducted in November through December 2003 by visiting individual homes and leaving the questionnaire for completion.

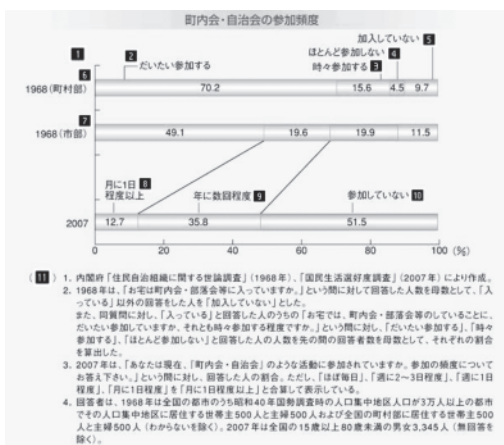
According to the *2007 national survey on lifestyle preference*¹² by the Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2007), in response to a question on a comparison of their connection to the region between the present and 10 years ago, 46.5% said that it "hasn't changed," 30.9% said that it has waned and 7.0% said that it has strengthened. For reasons behind their waning connection with the region, the top responses were as follows: 55.3% attributed it to "diminishing sense of affinity toward the region among the people," while 49.8% said it was due to "a lack of opportunities to deepen their friendship with people in the neighborhood," and 38.3% reasoned that it was due to "an increase in the number of those who do not welcome strangers becoming involved in their lives." Regarding interactions with neighbors, 40.7% said that they "and their neighbors frequently visit each other's places"; 50.9% said they "do not visit each other's places"; and 7.8% said that "there is no one who is applicable." As for other relationships, 59.1% said that they and "their relatives frequently visit each other," followed by those who referred to "people in the workplace or those related to work," (39.3%); "friends from school or childhood friends," (37.6%); "friends made in gatherings to work on their hobby, studies, sports, etc." (37.5%); "acquaintances they met through their children" (24.0%) and "people they met in volunteer activities" (9.8%). When asked about the number of people involved based on the "depth of their relationship" with neighbors, 43.2% said that they have one to five neighbors with whom their relationship consists "mostly of just greeting" and 27.2% said they have about six to 10 such neighbors. Of the respondents, 47.0% said they have one to five neighbors with whom they "can interact by chatting casually," while 33.1% said "an applicable person does not exist." Of the respondents, 31.7% said that they have one to five neighbors who they can "cooperate with in everyday life," while 65.4% said that "an applicable person does not exist." Based on the aforementioned results, the Cabinet Office (2007) points out that the factors that have an impact on strengthening relationships (frequency and depth) with neighbors are "having children"; "being married with a spouse" and "having lived in the same residence for at least five years," while factors that are weakening relationships with neighbors are because the people are "those who have earned university undergraduate or graduate degrees"; "salaried workers"; and "living in apartment buildings."

(3) Changes in civic activities

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Office (2007) has also indicated changes in civic activities in regions in a time series. Figure 3 compares 1968 and 2007 in terms of the frequency of participation in

¹² The Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2007); this survey was conducted based on the theme of "connections between the family, region and the workplace" and polled the awareness of Japanese people toward the following main items: (1) connection with the region; (2) level of satisfaction and awareness in daily life; and (3) the Japanese people's awareness toward their connection to the work place. The target group for the survey and sampling methods used were the same as the previous poll and the survey was conducted in January 2007 by visiting individual homes and leaving the questionnaire for completion (valid number of responses: 3,383)

neighborhood and community associations, while figure 4 shows the relationship between the status of participation in regional activities and the frequency of interaction with neighbors¹³.



- ① Year
- ② More or less participate
- ③ Occasionally participate
- ④ Mostly do not participate
- ⑤ Have not joined an association
- ⑥ 1968 (rural areas)
- ⑦ 1968 (urban areas)
- ⑧ At least one day every month
- ⑨ Around a few times a year
- ⑩ Do not participate

Figure 3: Frequency of participation in neighborhood and community associations

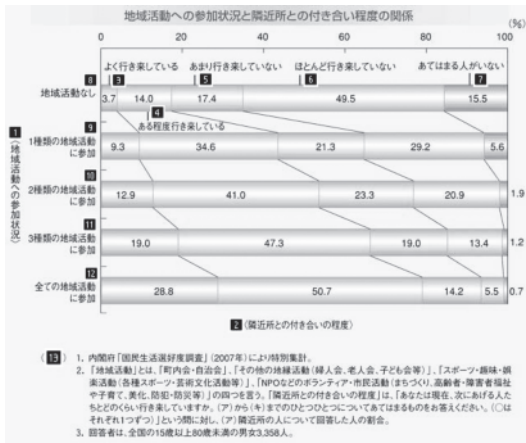
11 (Note)

1. Created from the Cabinet Office’s *Public opinion survey on residents’ community organizations*, 1968 and *The 2007 National survey on lifestyle preferences*, 2007.
2. Regarding the question “Is your household a member of a neighborhood, village or any other association in the area?” in the 1968 survey, the parameter was set to the number equal to those who responded, “Yes, a member,” and deemed those who did not respond as “No, not a member.”

Also, regarding the same question, out of those who responded “Yes, a member,” a follow-up question was asked: “Does your household more or less participate in the neighborhood, village or any other association in the area or does it amount to occasional participation?” Regarding this question, the parameter used in the previous question was used for the total number of those who responded, “More or less participate”; “Occasionally participate” and “Mostly do not participate, and then a percentage of each was computed.

3. For the 2007 survey, the percentages shown are for those who responded to the question “Do you currently participate in activities for groups like a neighborhood or a community association? Please tell us the frequency of your participation.” However, the responses “Almost every day”; “Around two or three days a week”; “Around once a week”; and “Around once a month” were totaled and presented as “At least one day every month.”
4. The respondents in 1968 consisted of those who lived in cities that had a population of at least 30,000 in densely populated areas, out of all the cities nationwide at the time of the census in 1965. Specifically, the respondents were 500 heads of household and 500 homemakers who lived in these densely populated areas as well as 500 heads of household and 500 homemakers in rural areas nationwide (excluding those who responded “I do not know”). Respondents in the 2007 survey consisted of 3,345 men and women nationwide who were at least 15 years old up to less than 80 years old (excluding those who did not respond.)

¹³ Cabinet Office (2007), Figure 3 is based on Figure 2-1-22 on p. 80, while Figure 4 is based on Figure 2-1-10 on p. 71.



- ① Degree of interaction with neighbors
- ② Status of participation in regional activities
- ③ Frequently visit each other's places
- ④ Visit each other's places to a certain degree
- ⑤ Do not visit each other's places that much
- ⑥ Virtually do not visit each other's places
- ⑦ An applicable person does not exist
- ⑧ No regional activities
- ⑨ Participate in one type of regional activity
- ⑩ Participate in two types of regional activity
- ⑪ Participate in three types of regional activity
- ⑫ Participate in all types of regional activity

Figure 4: Relation between the Status of participation in regional activities and interactions with neighbors

(Note)

1. Especially compiled from Cabinet Office (2007) *The 2007 National survey on lifestyle preferences*.
2. Regional activities refer to the following four items: neighborhood and community associations; other regional activities (women's associations, senior's associations, children's associations, etc.); sports, hobbies and entertainment activities (various sports, art and cultural activities, etc.); and volunteer and civic activities, such as NPOs (town planning, welfare for the elderly and handicapped people, childcare, beautification, crime prevention; disaster prevention, etc.). "The degree of interaction with neighbors" shows the percentage of those who responded to "(a) people in the neighborhood" in a question that asked, "Regarding the following people, how often do you visit each other's places? Please respond to each item from (a) to (g) and select an applicable answer (circle only one per item)."
3. Respondents consisted of 3,358 men and women nationwide who were 15 years and older up to 79 years old.

The following characteristics can be detected within the details of civic activities in regions. In a survey by the Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2004), in response to a question on the type of activities that require proactive participation mainly by people in the region, there were many respondents who supported the following: "crime prevention and disaster prevention" (84.4%); "care and welfare for the elderly" (78.5%); "healthy ways for young men to grow up" (74.3%); and "environmental conservation" (71.0%). In contrast, the responses were split among those who supported "events, such as festivals" (40.5% said they were necessary, while 40.9% said they were not necessary). Regarding region-based activities, such as NPOs and volunteering, 10.1% said they currently participate in such activities, while 51.6% said they want to participate in the future. Among the top factors that prevent participation in regional activities were "Do not have time to participate" (35.9%); "Do not have any interest" (15.1%); and "Cannot find the opportunity to participate" (14.2%).

The participation rate in regional activities (the percentages for those who participate sev-

eral times a year and those who participate at least one day per month) in a survey by the Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2007) is as follows: 48.2% in "neighborhood and community association"; 24.8% for "other region-based activities (women's associations, seniors' associations, children's associations, etc.); 32.0% for "sports, hobbies, recreational activities"; and 18.5% for "volunteering, civic activities such as NPOs." However, looking at the responses by age, the participation rate in neighborhood and community associations is above 50% for those who are at least in their 40s and the rate exceeds 60% for those who are in their 50s and above. This shows that the participation rate in region-based organizations, such as community associations, differs slightly based on age groups, given that the participation rates in women's association and similar groups are over 30% for those who are 35 to 44 years old as well as for those who are in their 60s and above. As for the "role of neighborhood and community associations," many expect the groups to play the following roles: "improve trust among residents and awareness of helping each other" (45.0%); "continuing and preserving the region's traditional arts and festivals" (45.0%); "environmental conservation and beautification" (37.9%); "town planning in the region" (37.1%); and "improve public safety in the region" (31.7%).

According to the 2010 national survey on lifestyle preference¹⁴ by the Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2010), the enrolment rate for neighborhood and community associations and other groups (excluding women's, seniors' children's association, PTA, etc.) is 73.0%, and 95.9% of them donate or pay membership fees to these associations. In terms of groups that respondents would like to see assume important activities in building the region, many respondents mentioned a municipal administrative organization as well as community and neighborhood associations. Specifically, areas in which the respondents have high hopes for their community association to achieve are "town planning activities" (71.2%); "activities that support sports, cultural and artistic experiences" (64.1%); and "activities aimed at crime and disaster prevention as well as transportation safety" (63.6%).

Activities that the respondents participated in during the past year are as follows: 73.9% were involved in "activities aimed at communicating among residents (includes circulating community notices from home to home, sending bulletins); 59.1% in "activities aimed at beautifying and cleaning the environment"; and 49.5% were involved in "holding events (*bon-odori* summer festival, other festivals, meetings held to respect the elderly, etc.)." The participation rates were as follows (the percentage of those who participated at least once a week

¹⁴ The Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2011); this survey was aimed to understand the Japanese people's awareness toward "a sense of happiness" and a "new public commons" as well as to understand their awareness toward the potential needs for public services in regional life and the role expected of the person in the region who is charged with fulfilling such needs, in addition to the role to be played by individuals. The target group for the survey as well as the sampling method used were the same for those used in the previous survey, and the survey was conducted in March 2011 by visiting individual homes and leaving the questionnaire for completion (valid number of responses: 3,578). However, note that the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred during the survey period).

and those who participated at least once a month): 78.2% for “activities aimed at communicating among residents”; 20.2% for “activities aimed at beautifying and cleaning the environment”; 7.5% for “holding events,” and other activities (disaster prevention, crime prevention, transportation safety, welfare, etc.) were at the 20% level. It can be deduced that most of these activities are being held by specific residents. In terms of having experience in participating in regional activities (the percentage of those who regularly participate and those who have experience participating in such activities), 28.8% mentioned “town planning activities (includes activities aimed at environmental beautification)”; 28.3% said “activities that support sports, cultural and artistic experiences (includes regional events and festivals)”; and 23.2% noted “activities aimed at crime and disaster prevention as well as transportation safety.”

Based on the aforementioned results, it was clear to the Cabinet Office (2007) that there were many characteristics shared by those who tend to have relationships with other neighbors and those who have the tendency to participate in civic activities in their region. Specifically, factors such as “older”; “have children”; “married/have a spouse”; “have lived in the area for at least five years” pushed down the rate of non-participation in regional activities, while factors such as “being employed (salaried workers or self-employed workers)” and “live in an apartment building” pushed up the rate of non-participation. Meanwhile, according to the National and Regional Planning Bureau of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (2005) *Survey Report on Community Renewal and Creation in Metropolitan Areas*¹⁵, the factors that affect the degree of participation in civic activities include “the degree of interaction with others who live in areas within walking distance”; “age”; “number of years living in the area”; and “population density of the inhabited area.” Also, those who feel that the region they live is “easy to live in” are in a region in which residents trust each other in emergency situations, such as when a disaster or a crime is taking place; there is a strong awareness to help each other; and civic activities are vigorous. Thus, aside from the residents’ attributes or interaction within their neighborhoods, it can be thought that factors exist that work toward raising the level of involvement in their community.

3 . The Community and Social Capital

Here, we will arrange the content of past research on the community and social capital. The term “social capital” is defined as “characteristics of a social organization, namely trust, norms and network, which can raise the efficiency of a society by invigorating cooperative behavior among people.”¹⁶

¹⁵ This survey was aimed at understanding the awareness of the preference and actual behaviors as well as their future intentions among those in the resident community in Tokyo. This was a web-based questionnaire conducted in February 2005 that surveyed men and women who were at least 20 years old and living in Tokyo (registered participants) (number of valid responses: 2017).

¹⁶ Putnam, Robert D. (2000).

(1) Diminishing regional relations and social capital

The survey on *Social capital: in pursuit of rich human relations and a virtuous cycle of civic activities*¹⁷ by the Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2003) focuses on the relationship between social capital and civic activities, by verifying and quantitatively understanding their relations. According to this survey, social capital has possibly declined, centered on relationships with neighbors, in the context of changes over the years¹⁸ of the past 20 years or so. It shows the possibility of social capital waning in regional areas, remaining unchanged or showing signs of recovery in large cities (Tokyo, Osaka and Kanagawa Prefecture, etc.). Meanwhile, it also points to new types of social capital being spawned by progress made in new civic activities, such as with NPOs and volunteer groups, and making for a condition in which relationships of mutual trust and networks that had not been seen to date are spreading.

According to this survey, those who participate in civic activities are generally highly trusting and this group has a comparatively high level of those who are socially active in interacting or mingling with others. Looking at it from another angle, many of those who are generally trustworthy and are socially robust in interacting and mingling with others are involved in civic activities. The survey indicates that those who participate in civic activities may not be just broadening their sphere of social activity or interactions but might possibly be contributing to fostering social capital, given that they are involved in various types of activities both voluntarily and proactively. The survey also comments that because the three elements that make up social capital – social trust, norms of reciprocity (social participation) and network (interactions and mingling) – can possibly impact each other as well as have an effect of spreading and raising each other's levels, activating civic activities and fostering social capital are mutually positive for each other.

According to the Cabinet Office Economic and Social Research Institute (2005) *Report on Research and Survey on the Renewal of Community Functions and Social Capital*¹⁹, it became clear that social capital of an individual fosters a sense of safety in daily life and a high praise for the community one lives in can possibly raise the level of safety regarding their daily life. The level of social capital of an individual tends to be higher among “women more than

¹⁷ Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2003) conducted a survey by both mailing and posting a questionnaire on the Internet in order to understand the awareness and activity related to social capital among individuals. The mailed-in survey was conducted in February through March 2003 and targeted men and women who were at least 20 years old (number of valid responses: 1,878), while the web-based questionnaire was conducted in January through February 2003 and targeted registered participants nationwide (valid number of responses: 2,000).

¹⁸ Indicators on social capital was extracted from NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute's Survey on the Present State of People's Awareness (1978, 1996) and the Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities by the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (1981, 2001), and a comparison is made of aggregate values assigned to two different times.

¹⁹ Web-based questionnaire on social capital and the community was conducted in March 2005 (number of valid responses: 3000).

among men”; “the employed more than among the unemployed”; “those who live in the same area for a long time more than those who live in an area for a short time”; “those who are married more than those who are unmarried”; “those who have a high level of education than less education”; “those who have a high level of income more than low income”; and “those who own their own home more than those who rent.” However, in a comparison with the time of the survey taken by the Cabinet Office’s Social Policy Bureau (2003), the indication is that social capital is declining at the individual level. Meanwhile, those with a high rate of participation in volunteer activities tend to have a harsh assessment of their own community by saying that it is “difficult to live in, not safe and not lively.” In contrast, those who have a high level of participation in regional activities have a tendency to evaluate by saying that their region is “easy to live in, safe and lively.” Thus, the survey indicates that the source of wanting to make a change because of a sense of urgency being felt for the community stems from an impact from a bridging-type social capital rather than a bonding-type social capital.

The changes that have taken place over the years in social capital are clear in *Japan’s Social Capital and Policies*²⁰ written by the Japan Research Institute, Ltd. (2008). From 2003 through 2007 the status quo was maintained nationwide in terms of socializing with neighbors and society (to the extent of interacting with friends, acquaintances, relatives/extended family), and a possibility of a stronger demand for casual and accessible activities, such as sports, hobbies, and entertainment, was evident. Regarding participation in society, the percentage of those who participated in regional activities fell from 30.4% in 2003 to 22.4% in 2007, with participation in activities, such as volunteering and in NPOs, on the decline since 2005. Thus, the inference here is that waning interactions with neighbors is having an impact on weakening participation in regional activities. Meanwhile, a composite index on social capital by prefecture reveals that the reading is relatively high in western Japan and that the levels for the bridging and bonding indices tend to be positively correlated.

In the meantime, using a panel analysis of the prefectures, Nobuko Kanaya (2008) indicates that there is a rather great possibility of civic activities contributing to the improvement of social, economic and lifestyle environments as well as the formation of social capital. This result is broadly consistent with the results drawn by the aforementioned surveys by the Cabinet Office’s Social Policy Bureau (2003) and the Cabinet Office Economic and Social Research Institute (2005). Regional-based civic activities are effective both socially and economically in a wide-ranging area, including public safety, health, education, the declining birthrate and employment, and it has been indicated that NPO entities could possibly help improve the diversifying challenges in modern society. However, it has been also pointed out that it is inevitable to say that Japan’s social capital is definitely on a declining trend because regional

²⁰ Web-based questionnaire survey, conducted in August 2007, was aimed to understand the actual state of social capital as well to understand the changes by comparing the results with the survey results from the previous year (number of valid responses: 3000).

networks (such as regional and volunteer organizations) – which had been active in various types of social activities based on their partnership with public entities – have been diminishing extensively in the past 20 to 30 years.

Haruya Sakamoto (2010) has drawn a conclusion as follows by studying Japan's social capital from two perspectives: the level of Japan's social capital in the context of an international comparison and fluctuations in Japan's social capital in a time series²¹. The level of Japan's social capital is at the middle of the range or even on the high side in the world. Viewing it in a time series shows that Japan's social capital was building up at a healthy rate until the first half of the 1990s, but it started to wane in the second half of the 1990s and into the 2000s, with this declining trend continuing to this day. This trend can be seen very clearly in the area of connections among people and participation in networks rather than in the area of social norms, such as a sense of trust or reciprocity.

(2) Measures to promote regional activities and social capital

Based on research mentioned thus far, the common observation seems to be that diminishing relations in regions in Japan in recent years are prompting a decline in participation in regional activities and further leading to weakening social capital. The weakening of the foundation of regional activities is possibly causing social capital to wane, along with bringing about a negative impact on the social, economic and lifestyle environments.

Regarding this issue, research conducted by Nagatomi, Ishida, Koyabu and Inaba (2011) indicates that both types of social capital – bonding and bridging – play an important role in promoting participation in regional activities and points out the necessity of devising measures aimed at strengthening both types of social capital in an integrated manner²². Active interactions with neighbors and with relatives or extended families that represent a bonding type of social capital as well as a bridging type of social capital, such as those through sports, hobbies and entertainment, can possibly have an impact on participation in regional activities. As a result,

²¹ Haruya Sakamoto (2010) p. 1-31. This publication discusses the current status of Japan's social capital by utilizing data from the following, among others: Rossteutscher, Sigrid(2008) "Social Capital and Civic Engagement: A Comparative Perspective", which uses data from the World Values Survey, pp. 208-240; Dario Castiglione, Jan W. van Deth, and Guglielmo Wolleb, eds., *The Handbook of Social Capital*. New York: Oxford University Press; the Japanese version of the General Social Surveys (JGSS; 2002) conducted by the Institute of Regional Studies at the Osaka University of Commerce and the Institute of Social Science at The University of Tokyo; an opinion survey on voter awareness by The Association for Promoting Fair Elections; survey on the Japanese national character by the Institute of Statistical Mathematics; Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities by the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; and a survey on Japanese people's awareness by the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute; community chest rates; and the rate of blood donations.

²² This web-based questionnaire, conducted in September 2008, focused on face-to-face interactions with others and aimed to elucidate the factors that drove people to participate in regional activities (number of valid responses: 3000). The categories used for the questions are virtually the same as those used by the Cabinet Office's Social Policy Bureau (2003).

the key to promoting participation in regional activities is to create a connection between both bonding and bridging social capital. Stronger initiatives to support volunteer and NPO initiatives could indirectly lead to participation in regional activities because the element of face-to-face interactions that impact participation in regional activities indicates the possibility of positive significance in participating in volunteer and NPO activities.

4 . Summary — organizing issues —

Here, we will clarify the various characteristics of a community, changes in the awareness toward a community as well as challenges that exist in spurring social capital based on arranging past research mentioned thus far.

Diminishing relations within a community that have advanced since the 1950s do not appear to have abated in recent years. This has been spurred on by the increase in those living in apartment buildings, such as condominiums, and a rise in the number of single households in such buildings, and neighborly relations are thought to be reinforced by families that live in one place for at least a certain period of time (married and living with one's spouse and families with a child and living in same place for at least five years). Looking at changes in civic activities in a time series, while the enrolment and participation rates in regional activities, such as in neighborhood and community associations, are sustained at a certain level, the frequency of participation is on a declining trend, with the truth of the matter being that this is being supported by middle-aged and elderly groups. People who tend to have a relationship with their neighbors and those who have a tendency to participate in regional and civic activities appear to have the common characteristic of "families in an older age group (older in age, married, living with a spouse with children and have lived in the same place for at least five years)." Aside from such attributes of residents and their interactions with neighbors, an impact also seems exist between "a favorable impression of a region (livable)" and participation in the community.

Regarding the relationship between communities and social capital, research indicates the possibility of waning social capital, centered on interactions with neighbors, since the second half of the 1990s. Also, weakening participation in regional activities is seen to be affecting the social and economic effectiveness of communities, such as public safety and health, in a wide-ranging manner, as well as prompting waning social capital. On the other hand, there has been an understanding that a new type of social capital (trusting relationship and networks) has been spawned and will likely expand through the advancement of a new type of civic activities, such as volunteering and NPOs. Participants in civic activities are said to possibly help contribute to fostering social capital since there is a certain type of correlation between the general trust and level of interaction and exchange and participation in civic activities. Social capital at the individual level tends to exist among people with the following attributes: women, employed, those with a long history of living in the same place, married, high level of education, high income earner and a homeowner. Those with a high participation rate in volunteer activities have a harsh assessment of their community, while those with a high rate of participation in regional activities appear to be providing favorable evaluations. And as for the continued

diminishing of relations in regions, research indicates that initiatives that will raise the level of both bonding and bridging social capital in an integrated manner are necessary.

Behind the backdrop of waning social capital and the sense of crisis it engenders is said to be a vague sense of insecurity among modern men that waning moral values and a sense of public duty due to a loss of cooperation among people (connections among people and sense of solidarity) in modern society could lead to more crime and rampant social malaise, resulting in social destruction²³. It can be said that people are always aware of this “discourse on restoring a sense of cooperation”²⁴ and the insecurity regarding social destruction, especially because of instability in modern society in which economic and social fluctuations are intense, and further, in urban areas as well as their suburbs where the population is highly transient.

However, this type of discourse does not seem to be limited to recent years. The report by the Community Issues Subcommittee of the Quality of Life Council’s Survey Group (1969) mentioned in a preceding chapter comments that the need for a community “is inherent in human life” because “people are social animals” and “it is also an expression of the hopes and desires of the modern society that is in pursuit of recovering a sense of solidarity among people through a place of living amid rapid social changes, such as urbanization and enhancements made in industries as well as a shift into an information-based society.”

The phenomena that represent various types of socioeconomic changes that have continued since the period of high economic growth may be different depending on the era, but it appears that we continue to yearn for a fundamental “recovery in cooperation (solidarity among people)” while we continue to live our lives by being exposed to changes. And presenting a prescription for this could be one role that community research can achieve.

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